



**CITY OF BURLINGTON  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS**

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**Steven Goodkind, P.E.**  
*DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS  
CITY ENGINEER*

**MEMO: FOR THE RECORD**  
**FROM: STEVEN GOODKIND**  
**4/22/11**

**RE: UNAUTHORIZED WASTEWATER DISCHARGE**

As most of you have heard by now, Burlington's Main Wastewater Treatment Plant discharged about 2.5 million gallons of undisinfected sewerage and stormwater during a heavy rainfall event on Wednesday morning.

Our Main Wastewater Treatment Plant is probably the most sophisticated facility of its' type in Vermont and it's operation has significantly contributed to the improvement in water quality that has been documented in our region of Lake Champlain. This incident was not the result of aging infrastructure or equipment.

It was the result of human error that occurred during a routine chlorine pump maintenance procedure that we have preformed weekly without incident, as our records show, for at least the past year and a half since this pump was placed into service. The pump was removed from service to check its' condition and then reinstalled, however the mechanic failed to reopen the supply valve to the pump. He did check the control panel which indicated that the pump was running, but as we now know, that does not mean it was actually pumping chlorine.

This pump is normally only activated during larger storm events and it was during the rain on Wednesday that an alert operator realized the problem with the chlorine concentration in the plant discharge. (The chlorine test for the stormflow discharge must be done manually as it cannot be accomplished with automatic sensors like the ones we have on the normal discharge from this plant.) The operator checked the pump, found the closed valve and corrected the problem. We have now modified our procedures for maintaining this pump and checking its' operation so that this will not reoccur.

Attached is Laurie Adam's report to the State of Vermont regarding this incident. Please feel free to contact either Laurie or myself if have further questions.

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